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ABSTRACT

Hypothesizing that the dimensions of developmental problems faced by the moderately retarded will be analogous to those faced by the mildly retarded, this study considers the appropriateness of the structure of the Social Learning Curriculum (SLC), originally developed for the mildly retarded, for the moderately retarded. The SLC framework identifies twelve needs areas, and provides each with a pedagogical counterpart in the curriculum. The procedure for this study consisted of three steps: compiling a mailing list; designing a questionnaire; and sorting responses. The open-ended questionnaire probed five general areas: psychological and emotional behavior; social and interpersonal relations; motor skills; personal maintenance; and work, academic, and home skills. Copies were sent to individuals directly involved in programming for moderately retarded adults in each state. A summary of the findings concludes that the major hypothesis of the study is upheld and points out four new areas of need. Information from questionnaire returns is presented in tabular form. Related documents are ED 075 972, ED 084 658, SO 006 684, 685 and 688. (Author/KMS)

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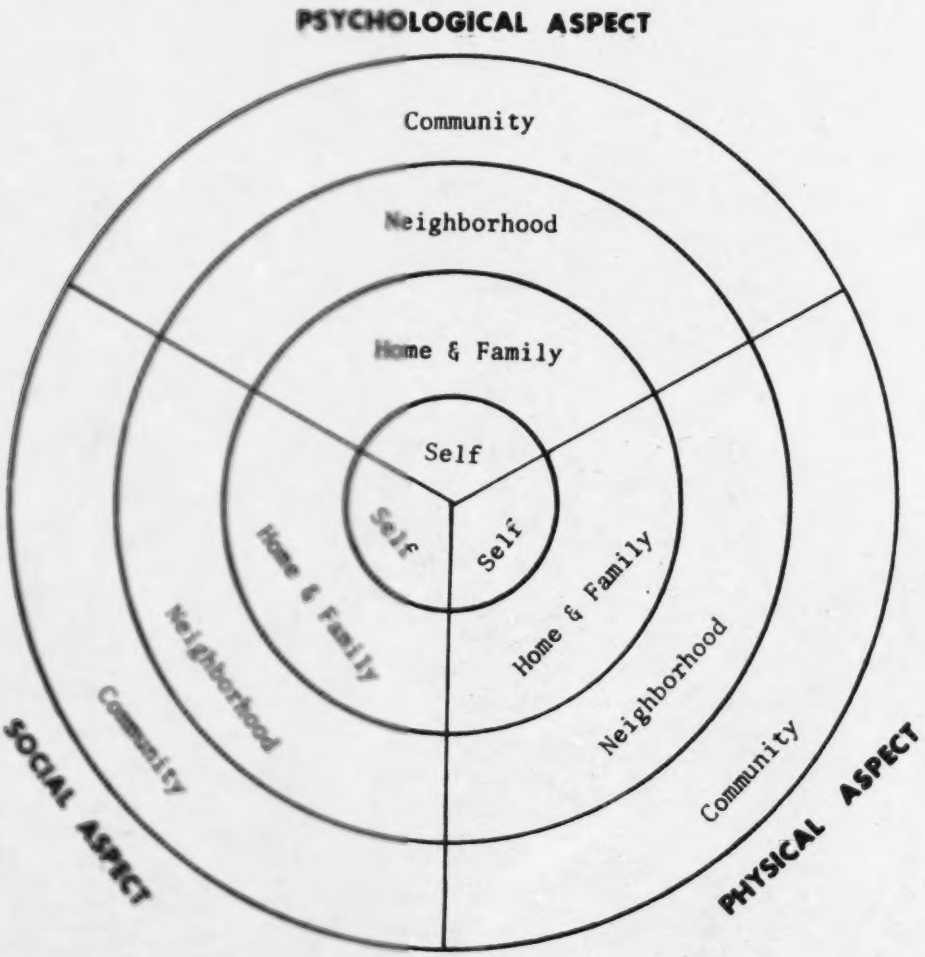

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Developmental Problems of the Moderately Mentally Retarded

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Since 1968, the Curriculum Research and Development Center in Mental Retardation at Yeshiva University has been engaged in the development of a Social Learning Curriculum (SLC) for educable mentally retarded children. The theoretical basis for development lies in a model of the child's expanding environment and environmental components (Goldstein, 1969). The curriculum is designed to provide a comprehensive and systematic framework in which the educable child learns the "life skills" necessary to think critically and act independently in his home and family, neighborhood, and community (Heiss and Mischio, 1972).

In early 1972, the decision was made to adapt and refine the SLC for moderately retarded children; that is, youngsters with measured IQs between 30 and 50. These are generally individuals who have been classified educationally as semidependent and placed in classes for trainable mentally retarded children. These youngsters may be considered to have the potential for social adjustment in varying environments and economic usefulness in a sheltered workshop, home, or hostel (Robinson and Robinson, 1965).

The Center views mentally retarded children and youth as constituting a continuum of cognitively, perceptually, motorically, and affectively disabled children. The point on the continuum occupied by any one child is a function of his status with respect to balances and imbalances in all four characteristics. The traditional terms of educable and trainable are primarily facilitators of communication rather than logical categories emanating from an assessment of

process. These terms are more attentive to etiology than function, and their relevance to educational and curricular objectives is questionable (Dunn, 1968; Lilly, 1970; Quay, 1968).

Within the framework of the Social Learning Curriculum, the terminal goals for the mildly retarded have been considered in terms of their abilities to think critically and act independently in the context of adult life in the community. There is no reason to expect the overall framework of the SLC to be less relevant to the moderately retarded than to the mildly retarded.

A crucial component of the curriculum development process is the identification of the needs of its target population. The designation of valid curricular and educational objectives requires a thorough understanding of the problems confronting the mature individual and the skills necessary to deal effectively with those problems. Early in the development of the SLC for educables, surveys were conducted with professionals involved in providing vocational rehabilitation, employment counseling, and social welfare services for retarded adults. They were asked to identify the critical problems faced by their clients. Analysis of their responses provided the basis for designation of need areas, which provided a framework for the Social Learning Curriculum for educable retarded children (Goldstein, 1969). These need areas also provide a basis for ordering the content of the curriculum. Although fourteen need areas had been initially identified, the SLC ultimately presented twelve need areas within three general dimensions:

1. psychological needs - respect, emotional security, expression, and control;
2. physical needs - maintenance, utilization, experiences, and identification;
3. social needs - communication, socialization, dependence, and economic security.

Each of the need areas referred to above has a pedagogical counterpart, referred to as a Phase. Each Phase (group of teaching-learning transactions) "...deals with a socio-occupational concept or rational cluster of concepts and associated behaviors," (Goldstein, 1969, p. 15). The current study will consider the appropriateness of this Phase structure for the moderately retarded. Curriculum goals for the moderately retarded are expected to be essentially the same as those for the mildly retarded, differing perhaps only in scope. The moderately retarded are expected to exercise some critical thinking and a degree of independent behavior but within a somewhat narrower environment (e.g., within a sheltered workshop, rather than in competitive employment). Verification of the assumed congruence of educational goals for the mildly and moderately retarded is the subject of this report. Specifically, it is hypothesized that the dimensions of developmental problems faced by the moderately retarded will be analogous to those reported earlier (Goldstein, 1969) with regard to the mildly retarded.

Procedure

The procedure will be described in three sections, recording the sequence of events in this study:

1. compilation of mailing list,
2. questionnaire design,
3. sorting of responses.

1. Compilation of mailing list: Letters of inquiry were sent to consultants in the State Department of Education and the Office of Mental Retardation (or its equivalent) in each state and in the District of Columbia. The letter explained that the Center was designing a questionnaire to identify problems in developmental areas crucial to the optimal functioning of moderately retarded young adults. The consultants were asked to provide the names and addresses of

five to ten individuals in their states who are directly involved in programming for moderately retarded adults. No restrictions were placed on the kind of agency, institution, school, workshop, or program. It was emphasized that the Center was interested in locating individuals working directly with the moderately retarded in order to draw on their expertise in the formulation of overall curricular objectives for this population.

As replies from consultants in each State Department of Education and Office of Mental Retardation were received, certain individuals they identified were selected for the survey. Selection was made with the idea of contacting individuals in as wide a variety of settings as the state offered for the education and training of its moderately retarded citizens. In some cases, this was not possible because all or most of the individuals referred to were working in one kind of setting, e.g., a residential institution for the retarded. For those states where no reply was received from either the State Department of Education or the Office of Mental Retardation, or where the total number of referrals was less than five, survey respondents were selected from a directory of state and local resources for the mentally retarded (HEW, 1969).

2. Questionnaire design: The questionnaire (Appendix B) was open-ended and probed five general areas:

1. psychological and emotional behavior,
2. social and interpersonal relations,
3. motor skills,
4. personal maintenance, and
5. work, academic, and home skills.

Three examples of potential problems were shown under each heading as an aid in defining the general area. (A final section invited listing of any problems that

did not fit any of the above categories.)

A total of 470 questionnaires were mailed during a six-week period in the fall of 1972. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, i.e., the identification of those problem areas hindering the success of moderately retarded adults in different environments. Demographic information was requested, including the kind of program, total population served, number of moderately retarded young adults within this population, and the age range of the moderately retarded group.

Within each general area respondents were asked to list several specific problems faced by the individuals with whom they work. Next to each item listed, respondents were to estimate the approximate percentage (e.g., 25 percent, 50 percent, 75 percent, or 100 percent) of all moderately retarded individuals for whom it was a problem. If the examples cited were applicable to the population of their own facility, respondents were to include those items in their list along with the appropriate percentages. Comments about the questionnaire were encouraged, as was the use of additional space as necessary. The "negative" format, requesting lists of problems was used to identify those areas of difficulty impeding the success of the moderately retarded in postschool life. It was felt that this method would yield results relevant to the stated hypothesis. Furthermore, after restatement in positive terms, results would be conducive to the formulation of objectives and the development of a curriculum that had as its core, the body of knowledge and processes, or social learnings, necessary for optimal levels of critical thought and independent action by the moderately mentally retarded.

3. Sorting of responses: Each problem listed by respondents was typed on a small card; duplicates were eliminated. The deck of cards was sorted by each of ten staff members of the Center. Each sorter was asked to group the problem statements they judged to be related. There was no limit placed on the number of categories that could be used.

Results

Letters of inquiry. One hundred and one letters of inquiry were mailed to consultants in the State Departments of Education and Offices of Mental Retardation in the fifty states and the District of Columbia (see Table I). A total of fifty five replies were received, representing every state. Both the Office of Mental Retardation and the State Department of Education responded in twelve states. Twenty-nine State Departments of Education and twenty-five Offices of Mental Retardation replied. The consultants listed 817 potential questionnaire repondents.

Insert Table I here

Questionnaire Returns

Table I shows the number of questionnaires mailed to each state. A total of 103 completed questionnaires were returned from forty-four states. An additional 21 were returned by the recipients as not applicable to their program population. The origin of 2 completed questionnaires could not be determined. A summary of returns is also shown in Table 2, as is the information concerning respondents' programs.

Insert Table 2 here

Table I: Sources of Respondents

State	Number of Referrals			Number of Questionnaires Sent	Number of Questionnaires Returned
	Total	Dept. of Ed.	Office of M.R.		
Alabama	4	4	-	9	0
Alaska	12	5	7	10	3
Arizona	14	10	4	11	7
Arkansas	3	3	-	10	2
California	-	-	-	11	3
Colorado	10	-	10	10	2
Connecticut	11	-	11	11	2
Delaware	6	6	-	10	1
D.C.	0	-	-	1	0
Florida	6	6	-	10	2
Georgia	10*	10	*	27	9
Hawaii	10	5	5	12	3
Idaho	5	-	5	7	2
Illinois	4	-	4	13	2
Indiana	10	10	-	9	1
Iowa	13	8	5	13	5
Kansas	0	-	-	6	0
Kentucky	10	10	-	11	2
Louisiana	0	-	-	8	0
Maine	6	-	6	9	4
Maryland	18	8	10	14	9

Table I, Continued

State	Number of Referrals: Total	Dept. of Ed.	Office of M.R.	Number of Questionnaires Sent	Number of Questionnaires Returned
Massachusetts	10	10	-	8	3
Michigan	7	7	-	9	1
Minnesota	15	9	6	10	1
Mississippi	0	-	-	2	1
Missouri	17	7	10	10	1
Montana	0	-	-	2	1
Nebraska	0	-	-	6	2
Nevada	4	4	-	6	2
New Hampshire	5	-	5	8	-
New Jersey	9	-	9	12	1
New Mexico	5	-	5	6	3
New York	13	13	-	12	3
North Carolina	9	1	8	11	2
North Dakota	9	9	-	10	1
Ohio	10	-	10	8	2
Oklahoma	5	5	10	8	2
Oregon	9	9	-	10	1
Pennsylvania	5	-	5	13	0
Rhode Island	11	-	11	13	0
South Carolina	5	-	5	7	2
South Dakota	6	-	6	5	2
Tennessee	10	10	-	10	1
Texas	10	-	10	10	1

Table 1, Continued

State	Number of Referrals: Total	Dept. of Ed.	Office of M.R.	Number of Questionnaires Sent	Number of Questionnaires Returned
Utah	10	10	-	10	1
Vermont	-	-	-	1	-
Virginia	20	10	10	10	2
Washington	4*	*	4	10	1
West Virginia	13	-	13	10	3
Wisconsin	21	9	13	17	-
Wyoming	17	10	7	17	-
Total	412	208	204	470	103

*Sent list of all professionals in state working in programs for the moderately retarded.

Table 2: Characteristics of Respondent Facilities

Kind of Program	Number Responding	Total Population	Moderately Retarded Population	Age Range of Moderately Retarded Population
1) Residential	17	592.5	164.6	4 - 83
2) Special School	34*	139.6	53.9	2 - 35
3) Special Class	7	62.4	37.6	6 - 24
4) Sheltered Workshop	15	61.0	34.5	13 - 58
5) Occupational Day Care	9	114.9	41.3	6 - 63
6) Day Care	2	160.0	40.0	2 - 54
7) Sheltered Workshop/ Special School	2	415.0	45.0	2 - 30
8) Mixed-Day & Residential	3	221.0	93.0	7 - 58
9) Mixed-Day Care & Training Center	21	55.0	79.0	2 - 35
10) Mixed-Sheltered Workshop & Work Activity Center	2	125.0	75.0	16 - 55
11) Information not available	8	-	-	-
12) All Programs	103	118.4	66.4	2 - 83

*Six schools did not report number and age of Ss.

Analysis of responses: The 103 completed questionnaires listed a total of 289 different problems faced by moderately retarded adults. These were ultimately sorted into fifteen problem areas by each of ten staff members. All sorters did use essentially identical categories. Thus, there was high agreement on the utility of the need areas as an organizational framework for the content of a curriculum for moderately retarded children.

There was markedly less agreement on the placement of a specific problem within a given need area. However, of the 289 problems, 158 (or about 55 percent) were assigned to the same need area by five or more of the ten judges.

Discussion

Of the 470 questionnaires mailed, only 103 were completed. An additional 21 were returned, marked not applicable, resulting in a total return rate of 26.4 percent. This rather low return rate may be largely accounted for by an unfortunate coincidence in timing and an error of omission in the cover letter accompanying the questionnaire. The questionnaires were mailed in early September, coinciding with the beginning of the new school year. Respondents were asked to submit the completed questionnaire within two weeks of their receipt. It is probable that many individuals were unable to complete the questionnaire within the time period, owing to the press of other duties, and decided not to do so after that date because of the request made in the cover letter. However, the disappointing return rate is somewhat offset by the quality of completed questionnaires actually returned and their demographic representativeness.

The analysis of 127 responses received confirmed the congruence of the educational goals. More specifically, we were able to identify, (from the responses) 289 problems faced by the moderately retarded adult. Using the process of sorting the problems into need areas, as had been done in the

original cluster analysis for EMR, we were able to group the problems into fifteen need areas. These comprised the twelve original need areas plus 3 additional areas: academics, motor skills, and achievement.

While motor skills and achievement will become the foundations for new SLC Phases, development of materials related to academic needs per se will be delayed. This reflects both practical and philosophical decisions. Difficulties in mastering academic skills are frequently a major determinant in labeling an individual mentally retarded. The SLC was conceptualized and designed as a means of offering a nonacademically based alternative to the traditional curriculum. It would therefore be inconsistent for us to give a central role to academics.

However, academics do have a role - not as ends in themselves, but as means to the ultimate goals of independent behavior and critical thinking. Thus, the Center is planning a skills program that will focus on communication and quantitative thinking. This will make it possible for each individual to acquire the skills he needs for successful living as an adult in his community.

The problems listed under motor skills appeared to be of sufficient importance to warrant the development of a new Phase, even though some similar content already exists in other Phases. Results of field testing SLC Self Level materials had indicated that there was a body of prerequisite skills (primarily motor) necessary for successful participation in SLC. This information, plus the list of problems identified by the current questionnaire, provides sufficient rationale for the development of a new Phase, emphasizing motor skills, and entitled "Exploration."

A second Phase, tentatively called "Achievement," emerges from this cluster analysis. The needs included in this area are rather diverse, including "pride in doing best work possible," "ability to attend to an activity without being reminded," "aware of quality of performance," and "planning ahead." The content of the Phase will focus on developing attitudes and skills that contribute to what White (1959) refers to as competence.

Finally, an examination of the problems listed within each need area suggests two further potential Phases: sensory awareness and play. These Phases represent content which, while currently represented in the SLC, needs to be handled more comprehensively (and at a more basic level) in the program designed for moderately retarded children. The same Phases may also serve as an early childhood program for youngsters who will use the current version of the SLC.

Based on the analysis of the response to the questionnaire, it became possible to proceed on the assumption that, irrespective of an individual's physical and/or mental status, he is expected to react appropriately to his environment, recognize the criteria for social adjustment, and then perform in such a way as not to attract the disapproval of those with whom he interacts. To achieve this social competence, it is necessary to educate the child in such a way that he is exposed to these social experiences and provided with the means to solve the problems he will face. The SLC is designed to do just this and can therefore serve as an appropriate model for a curriculum for moderately retarded children.

Summary

The 103 questionnaires (from forty-five states) of 470 mailed were completed (21.8 percent), resulting in a list of 289 problems faced by moderately retarded adults. These were sorted by ten members of the Center staff, revealing agreement of five or more judges on 158 problems (55 percent). The following conclusions were drawn:

1. The SLC model is an appropriate framework for the development of a curriculum for moderately retarded children.

2. Need areas of the moderately retarded are congruent with those of the mildly retarded.

3. Four new Phases appear to be necessary, corresponding to the need areas of play, sensory awareness, exploration, and achievement.

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